



# Embassy of the United States of America

## Public Affairs Section, La Paz, Bolivia

Avenida Arce 2780, La Paz, Bolivia

For more information please contact: Phone 216-8122, Fax 216-8622

Embassy website: <http://bolivia.usembassy.gov>

---

**January 10, 2007**

## **Bolivia and the United States Extend Cultural Protection Agreement**

Today, the Ambassador of the United States Philip Goldberg and the Bolivian Viceminister of Culture Edgar Arandia presided over an official ceremony to announce the extension of the agreement on import restrictions for Bolivian archaeological and ethnological cultural objects into the U.S.

Ambassador Goldberg noted the need for cooperation between countries in addressing this problem: "This is an important tool that supports our joint efforts to stop the illicit trafficking of cultural patrimony. The United States supports the protection of cultural patrimony worldwide through several initiatives. An excellent example of this is the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, a program under which we have already funded several projects in Bolivia."

The governments of the United States and Bolivia extended for five years the Memorandum of Understanding to protect pre-Columbian archaeological objects as well as colonial and republican ethnological artifacts from Bolivia.

The Memorandum of Understanding first went into effect on December 2, 2001, at the request of the Bolivian Government, under Article 9 of 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. The United States found that Bolivia's cultural heritage was in danger of being looted and agreed to impose restrictions on the importation of certain objects. This agreement is designed to reduce the incentives for looting and provides an instrument to promote the understanding of Bolivian culture and the preservation of traditional religious practices.

Experts believe that the pre-Columbian culture in Bolivia reached a high degree of technological, agricultural, and artistic development. Unfortunately, the archaeological sites and objects needed to reconstruct and understand Bolivian history continue to be at risk to widespread looting that destroys this nonrenewable record of human development. The colonial and republican ethnological objects are also being looted. Due to their symbolic and historical significance, these objects play an irreplaceable role in the lives of Bolivian indigenous communities. The masks, textiles, and the ecclesiastical objects associated with religious rituals, serve as symbols of cultural identity and are a testimony to the continuity of pre-Columbian cultural elements in contemporary Bolivia.